

Tartan Weaving 101

Pamela Girard – ceryndip@yahoo.com

An Extremely Short History of Tartan

Way back beginning a couple of thousand years ago and continuing until the early 1700's, the village wore what the village weaver wove. The weaving pattern or sett was passed from generation to generation and each generation made their own small changes in the pattern. Gradually these patterns evolved into the tartans we know today. Eventually, certain patterns were recognized as being from certain areas (these became the district tartans) or belonging to certain clans or groups (these became the clan tartans). Then, in the late 1600's and early 1700's with the beginnings of industrialization they began writing down the tartan setts. From this point the tartan setts were standardized and have not really changed since. However, new setts are still being created and registered.

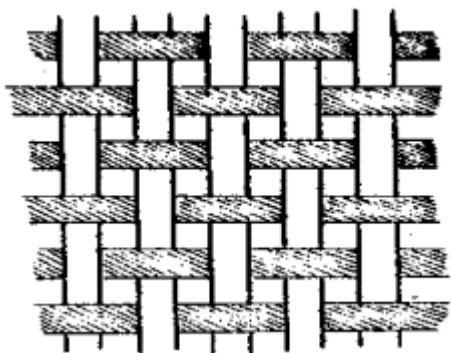
Plaids and Tartans

Plaid is a fabric woven with a stripe pattern both horizontally and vertically. Usually the same pattern but not always. Plaid may be woven in a variety of weaves such as tabby or twill.

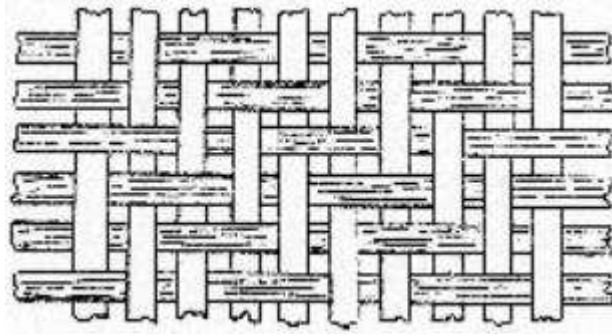
Tartan is a fabric woven with the same stripe pattern both horizontally and vertically. The pattern is usually mirrored. Tartan is woven in 2/2 twill weave structure.

Weave Structures

Tabby – The most commonly found weave structure. It is also the simplest: Over 1 warp thread and under the next, over, under, over under and so on.



2/2 Twill – Over 2 warp threads, under 2 warp threads, over 2, under 2, and so on. The weaving pattern is 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 1-4. Each row is offset by one thread creating a diagonal pattern. What this means is that with the first weft thread at the top, you go under the first and second warp thread and then begin over 2, under 2 for the remaining warp threads. Then the second weft thread goes over the first warp thread and under the second and third warp threads and then begins the over 2 and under 2. The third weft thread goes over the first and second warp threads and under the third and fourth and then begins the over 2 and under 2. The fourth weft thread goes under the first warp thread, then over the second and third warp threads and then begins under 2, over 2 on the remaining warp threads. Then repeat.



Warp – the base threads around which the weaving takes place. On a loom these are usually the vertical threads.

Weft – The horizontal threads that are woven around the warp threads.

Shuttle – device holding the weft threads, usually made from wood.

Tartan Setts – To make the pattern smaller, half or quarter the number of threads in the pattern. All these setts are mirrored which means that you work the pattern by starting at the top of the pattern and working your way down and then back up to the top and back down to the bottom and back up to the top and so on until you are done. This pattern is followed for the warp threads and also for the weft threads.

Royal Stewart (TRADE)

R14
B4
K4
Y2
K4
R4
K2
W2

Royal Stewart (trade) - small

Red 7
blue 2
black (k) 2
yellow 1
black (k) 2
red 2
black 1
white 1

Texas Bluebonnet

G16
R4
B32
W4
R4
W4
LB32
W4
LB32
W4
Y4

Campbell of Cawdor

A4 (TEAL)
K2
G16
K16
B16
K2
R4

Sir Walter Scott Campbell

K4

P14
K18
B4
G16
K4

Rob Roy (LUMBERJACK)

R66
K66

Rob Roy Hunting

G66
K66

Standard List of Colors

A = Light Blue (Azure)

B = Blue

C = Rose

D = Dark (+ color)

G = Green

K = Black

L = Light (+ color)

Lil = Lilac

Lv = Lavender

Ma = Magenta

Mn = Maroon

N = Grey (Neutral)

P = Purple

R = Scarlet (red)

T = Brown (tan)

W = White

Y = Yellow

Bibliography

Tartan Generator Software Website <http://www.clanheritage.com>

**Scarlett, James D. The Tartan Weaver's Guide. London: Shephard- Walwyn 1985 ISBN
0-85683-078-X (Tartan information, not many setts)**

**Chandler, Deborah. Learning to Weave. Loveland, Co: Interweave Press. 1995. ISBN 1-883010-03-9
(Loom Weaving)**